

## Message Text

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ACTION IO-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 DHA-02 DPW-01 SCS-03 SCA-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ORM-01 EB-07 AGR-05

AID-05 OMB-01 COME-00 /102 W  
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R 080416Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0896

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 18769

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, UNHCR, TH, LA, VS

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES  
SADRUDDIN AGA KHAN

REF: STATE 211644

1. I MET WITH SADRUDDIN AGA KHAN AT PATTAYA THE AFTERNOON  
OF SEPTEMBER 7. OUR MEETING WAS CANDID AND CORDIAL AS  
I HAVE KNOWN SADRUDDIN SINCE HE WAS A STUDENT AT HARVARD.

2. OUR DISCUSSION RANGED OVER THREE PRINCIPAL TOPICS.

A. THE ATTITUDE OF THE RTG TOWARD UNHCR. THE HIGH  
COMMISSIONER SEEMED CONCERNED OVER THE PRESENT AND FUTURE  
RELATIONS OF UNHCR WITH THE RTG AND RETURNED REPEATEDLY  
TO THIS THEME. HE OBVIOUSLY WISHES THE ARRANGEMENT BE-  
TWEEN THE RTG AND UNHCR TO BE EXCEEDINGLY CLEAR, HE  
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NOTES THAT UNHCR HAS NEVER BEEN "OPERATIONAL" AND IS

UNCERTAIN WITH REGARD TO THE ACTIVE ROLE TO BE PERFORMED HERE BY UNHCR REPS. HE ALSO WORRIED OVER THE MANNER IN WHICH UNHCR WILL COPE WITH THE INCIDENTS OF MISAPPROPRIATION OF FUNDS AND MALFEASANCE ON THE PART OF RTG OFFICIALS WHICH HE ANTICIPATES. AT THE SAME TIME, THE HIGH COMMISSIONER APPEARED DETERMINED TO GET THE UNHCR PROGRAM OFF THE GROUND AND TO DO HIS UTMOST TO MAKE THE PROGRAM A SUCCESS. I TOLD THE HIGH COMMISSIONER THAT I THOUGHT THERE WAS WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR THE UNHCR AS THE VEHICLE THROUGH WHICH FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN THAILAND SHOULD BE EXTENDED. THE THAIS VIEWED UNHCR AS A MEANS OF REASSURING THE LAO AND CAMBODIANS WITH REGARD TO REFUGEE RELIEF AND AS HE KNEW THEY WERE EXTREMELY ANXIOUS TO AVOID UNCOORDINATED FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES WHICH WOULD RAISE THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING TO AN UNACCEPTABLE LEVEL. IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS, I TOLD THE HIGH COMMISSIONER THAT THERE HAD BEEN MOMENTS OF SERIOUS DOUBT ON THE PART OF THE RTG, AS WELL AS MANY FOREIGN EMBASSIES IN BANGKOK, WITH REGARD TO THE WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY OF UNHCR TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN THAILAND. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER NOTED THAT IT HAD BEEN DIFFICULT TO GET FORMAL ARRANGEMENTS WORKED OUT WITH THE RTG. I STRESSED THE LOCAL VIEW THAT THE NEED FOR RELIEF WAS URGENT, THAT NOTWITHSTANDING THE MODALITIES THE THAI AT ALL LEVELS SEEMED TO BE ANXIOUS FOR UNHCR TO DO THE JOB AND THAT MANY OF THE THAI DOUBTS MAY HAVE STEMMED FROM THE RESERVATIONS WHICH WERE GENERALLY HELD REGARDING THE COMPETENCE OF HIS FORMER REPRESENTATIVE IN THAILAND.

B. THE URGENCY OF COMMENCING RELIEF OPERATIONS. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER SAID THAT HE WOULD BE VISITING REFUGEE CAMPS IN THE SOUTH ON SEPTEMBER 8TH AND WOULD GO TO THE NAN AREA ON SEPTEMBER 9TH AND ASKED FOR MY ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION IN THE CAMPS. I REPLIED THAT ACCORDING TO THE INFORMATION I HAVE RECEIVED, THE CONDITIONS WERE IN SOME CASES DEPLORABLE AND THAT INTERNATIONAL RELIEF WAS URGENTLY NEEDED. THE SITUATION IN NAN WAS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL AND KHLONGYAI IN SOUTHERN THAILAND ALSO LEFT A GREAT DEAL TO BE DESIRED. IN ADDITION, CONFIDENTIAL

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WE RECEIVED MANY REPORTS OF CORRUPTION ON THE PART OF THAI OFFICIALDOM IN REGARD TO REFUGEE SUPPLIES. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER SAID THAT HE HAD ALREADY DISPATCHED VERNER BLATTER AND ANOTHER OFFICER TO NAN AND THAT ADDITIONAL FIELD OFFICERS WOULD ARRIVE THIS WEEK. HE SAID THAT HE BELIEVED DEEPLY THAT UNHCR SHOULD BE REPRESENTED IN THE FIELD ON A FULL TIME BASIS AND NOT HAVE A STAFF WHICH WAS BANGKOK ORIENTED. I AGREED. I SAID I HOPED OPERATIONS COULD GET UNDER WAY FAST AND I TOLD

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER THAT AS HE KNEW WE HAD 2,086.2 METRIC TONS OF RICE WHICH WE WERE PREPARED TO TURN OVER TO UNHCR AT ONCE. I SAID I FELT THE IMMEDIATE ACCEPTANCE AND DISTRIBUTION OF THIS RICE WOULD HELP CREATE AN IMPRESSION OF ACTIVITY BY UNHCR. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER AGREED AND SAID THAT HIS STAFF WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH US WITH REGARD TO THIS MATTER. HE EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR THIS U.S. SUPPORT.

C. AMERICANS IN VIETNAM. IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARA 2 OF REFTTEL, I RAISED THE QUESTION OF AMERICANS STILL HELD IN SOUTH VIETNAM, EXPRESSING THE HOPE THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO OBTAIN SOME CLARIFICATION OF THIS PROBLEM DURING HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO HANOI. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER SAID THAT HE INTENDED TO DO WHAT HE WOULD AND THAT HE WOULD ALSO DO HIS UTMOST TO WORK OUT THE RETURN TO VIETNAM OF THOSE REFUGEES PRESENTLY IN GUAM WHO ARE AGITATING FOR REPATRIATION.

3. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ASKED FOR MY VIEWS REGARDING THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE MEO RETURNING TO LAOS. I SAID THAT IN MY VIEW THERE WAS VERY LITTLE CHANCE THAT ANY BUT A HANDFUL WOULD ELECT TO GO BACK. IN ADDITION TO THEIR FEARS OF THE COMMUNISTS, THEY WERE ALSO SKEPTICAL REGARDING THE TREATMENT THEY WOULD RECEIVE AT THE HANDS OF THE LOWLAND LAO NOW THAT GENERAL VANG PAO AND PRICE SOUVANNA PHOUMA WERE NO LONGER IN A POSITION TO GIVE THEM HIGH LEVEL SUPPORT. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER SAID HE WOULD RAISE MEO REPATRIATION WITH THE PGNU AS IT WAS ABSURD FOR THE LAO TO CARP ABOUT MEO REFUGEES IN THAILAND WHILE, AT THE SAME TIME, THEY CREATED A SITUATION WHICH MADE THEIR RETURN IMPOSSIBLE. I SAID THAT I WAS SURE THE PGNU WOULD MAKE GLOWING AFFIRMATIONS OF ITS DESIRE TO HAVE ALL MEO RETURN AND WOULD RHAPSODIZE REGARDING THE DELIGHTFUL ARRANGEMENTS IT WAS PREPARED TO MAKE FOR RETURNEES. THE FACT REMAINED THAT THESE PROMISES WOULD HAVE TO BE TAKEN WITH A CONFIDENTIAL

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GRAIN OF SALT AND OBVIOUSLY WOULD NOT BE BELIEVED BY THE MEO REFUGEES IN THAILAND UNTIL THE BAMBOO TELEGRAPH HAD GIVEN THEM SOLID INDICATIONS THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE OPPRESSED.

4. COMMENT: THE VISIT OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER IS MOST OPPORTUNE. HE IS BEING GIVEN ROYAL OR AT LEAST SEMI-ROYAL TREATMENT BY THE RTG AND APPEARED TO ME TO HAVE A VERY SOUND VIEW OF THE SITUATION HERE. WHILE HE IS LOYAL TO HIS ORGANIZATION WITH REGARD TO ITS SLOWNESS IN GETTING UNDERWAY, HE OBVIOUSLY IS MAKING AN EFFORT TO GET SOME QUALIFIED PEOPLE ON THE GROUND AND START ALLEVIATING THE PLIGHT OF THE REFUGEES.  
WHITEHOUSE

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## Message Attributes

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